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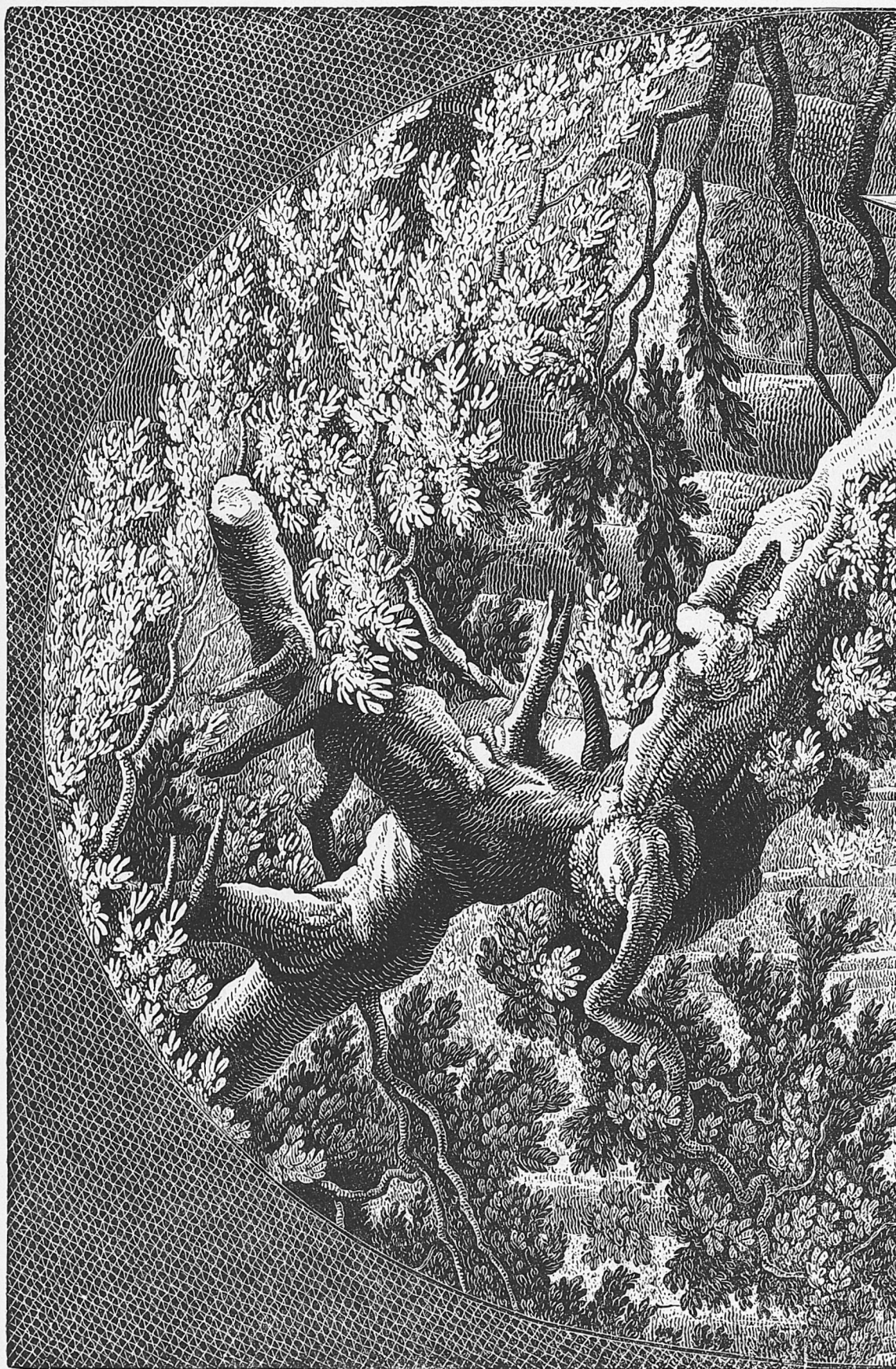
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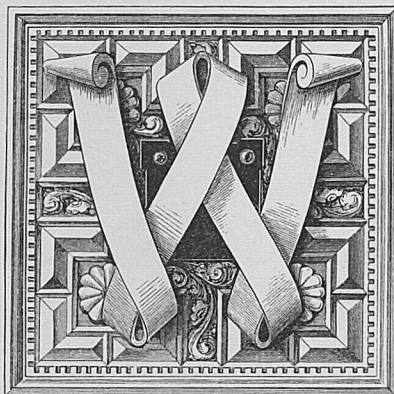
RETURNING FROM THE BOAR-HUNT.



DESIGNED FOR THE AMERICAN ART REVIEW BY LUDVIG S. IPSEN.

THE HISTORY OF WOOD-ENGRAVING IN AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

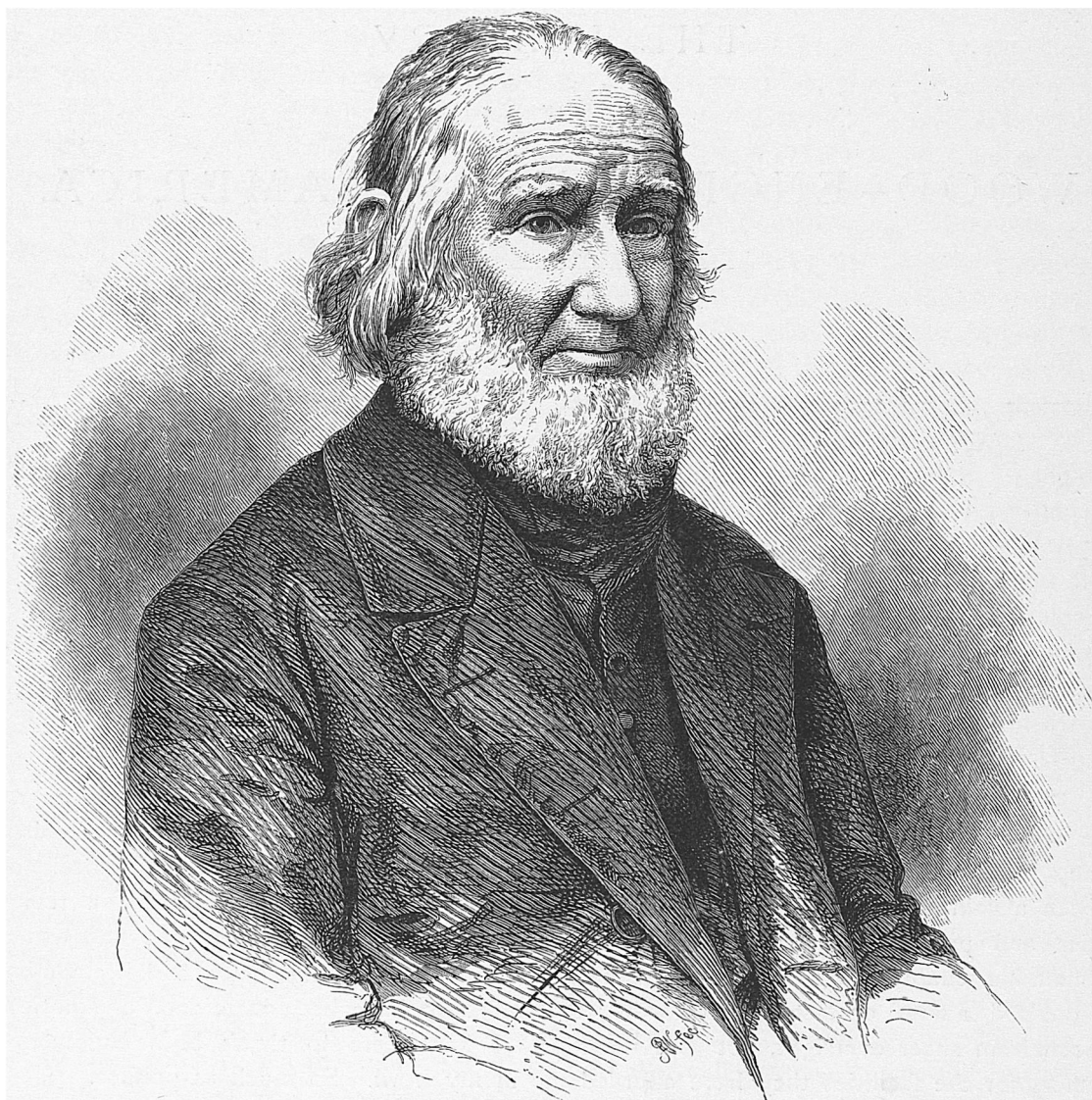


DESIGNED BY L. S. IPSEN.

HAT I am here attempting is a history of Engraving on Wood in America, not a dictionary of American engravers. For the first I think I have found enough to interest my readers; albeit of printed record there is nothing of any worth except Lossing's *Memorial of Dr. Anderson*, some half-dozen lines concerning three men (Anderson, Dearborn, and Hartwell) in Drake's *Biographical Dictionary*, and about as scanty information in Dunlap's *Arts of Design in the United States*. What I have gathered else has been from correspondence or conversation with the older men yet living, impartially collating the same; and from careful examination of whatever I could obtain access to of their and of the later works. Of five hundred engravers (more or less) of the present day what could I write? Even their names cannot be collected, nor any recollection had of many who are dead and gone. To attempt biographical notices had been a vain task. So I have only cared, except in two exceptional cases, for a review of the rise and progress of the art, with such instances as I could select of the best and most representative character. I have endeavored to be fair in my judgments; and if sometimes I have omitted names or lost sight of works that ought to have been mentioned and noticed, it has been from sheer oversight, not with intention. I have here to thank both engravers and publishers for the facilities they have afforded me in my work. So much as preface.

At the outset I may glance at a report, not without show of probability, that Franklin "cut the ornaments for his *Poor Richard's Almanac* in this way"; that is, on metal, in the manner of a wood-cut, for surface printing. He may have done so. Blake the painter did such metal plates as well as wood-cuts. The process is the same. Nevertheless, it is to Dr. Alexander Anderson that we may rightly ascribe the honor of being the first engraver on wood in America. Dunlap, in his *Arts of Design*, speaks of an eccentric genius, one John Roberts, a Scotchman,

of whom Anderson might have learned the art. I believe this also to be only rumor, based on the fact of Anderson's having been acquainted with the man, a miniature-painter and copper-engraver, and having engraved on copper with and for him. The first knowledge of box-wood being used for engraving may perhaps have been gained from Roberts, the date of his arrival in this country being that of Anderson's first attempts upon wood. It would not subtract from Anderson's merit. Lossing does not intimate even the likelihood of such a beginning. To Lossing I am mainly indebted for the biography of Anderson. Nearly all I can give concerning him, except some dates of books, and of course my own criticisms (only applied to work I have seen), I have learned from his *Memorial*, prepared for the Historical Society of New York, read to the members on the 5th of October, 1870, and printed for the Society in 1872,—prepared from materials gathered from Dr. Anderson himself, from his daughter, his grandson, and other friends.



ALEXANDER ANDERSON, AGED 92.

DRAWN BY AUGUST WILL. ENGRAVED BY ELIAS J. WHITNEY FOR THE "CHILD'S PAPER," 1867, PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

ALEXANDER ANDERSON was born on the 21st of April, 1775, two days after the battle of Lexington, in the same year that Bewick (then twenty-two years of age) received the premium of the Society of Arts, in London, for his engraving of *The Huntsman and Hound*, afterwards printed in an edition of Gay's *Fables*. Anderson's father was a printer, a Scotchman, but a

staunch supporter of the Colonial side, and a sufferer for the cause. Young Anderson's taste for art he himself attributed to his mother, who was in the habit of drawing for his amusement when he was a child. Prints also came before him (Hogarth's and others) through his father's business. "These prints," he writes in one of his letters, "determined my destiny." Such determination, one can see, was also helped by his getting hold of some type-ornaments, which gave him a notion of at least one kind of print-production.

At school he amused himself by copying engravings. Then, reading in Rees' *Cyclopædia* of the process employed, he got a silversmith to roll him out some copper cents; and with a graver made of the back-spring of a pocket-knife, ground to a point, started himself as amateur engraver on copper. He was twelve years old when he began; and proud enough, there is no doubt, when he had scratched out a head of Paul Jones and—he tells of it himself in a brief autobiographical paper—"got an impression with red oil-paint in a rude rolling-press" of his own constructing,—the same used by him two or three years later in taking impressions of his engraving of a head of Franklin. Afterwards a blacksmith made him some tools; and he engraved ships and houses and the like, for newspapers, of course in relief. In this way he soon earned money, only one other person being so engaged in New York.

On leaving school, his father not approving of his choice of engraving as a life-business, he was placed to study medicine under Dr. Joseph Young, going to him on the 1st of May, 1789, the day after the inauguration of Washington as first President of the United States. With Dr. Young he remained five years, occupying his leisure hours with engraving, of the most miscellaneous character,—anything from a dog-collar or card to a book frontispiece. So that before he had eighteen years of age he was employed by all the printers and publishers in New York, occasionally by others also, in New Jersey, in Philadelphia, and even as far as Charleston. At first his artist work was only on copper or type-metal,—on the latter I suppose in wood fashion, to be printed from the surface. But in 1793, being then eighteen, he had sight of certain works by Bewick (then claiming some attention in England, and of course the echo of his notoriety reaching here), learned what material he used (that perhaps from John Roberts), and, from the cuts themselves, of Bewick's method. He made trial of box-wood, and changed his course.

Some discrepancy occurs here in Lossing's dates. He says (page 32) that Anderson was ignorant of the use of box-wood until "early in 1794," when he was favored with a sight of Bewick's *Birds* and *Quadrupeds*. In the same page he writes: "The first mention of its use for gain in his Diary is under the date of the 25th of June, 1793, when he engraved a tobacco-stamp. *A few days afterward* he agreed to engrave *on wood* one hundred geometrical figures for S. Campbell, a New York bookseller, for fifty cents each, Campbell finding the wood. This was procured from Ruthven, a maker of carpenter's tools, who at first charged three cents apiece for the blocks, but finally asked four cents." To properly face the wood was a new, and no doubt a difficult, kind of work for him. "Campbell," Lossing tells us, "was not well pleased, but concluded he must give him that. It was *more than a year after that* before Anderson ventured to engrave elaborate pictures on the wood." The first of these were for Durell, the date of which Lossing gives as 1794, showing that the previous statement of 1794 as the time of his first acquaintance with Bewick and box-wood must be wrong,—most likely a misprint. Bewick's *Quadrupeds*, however, Anderson himself tells us in his Diary (this quoted too by Lossing) he first saw on the 17th of August, 1795. The book first seen may have been *The Looking-Glass for the Mind*, an earlier work of Bewick.

In 1794 then, at the age of nineteen, having given a year to experiments on the wood, he was actually, for William Durell, a New York publisher, copying these *Looking-Glass* cuts still upon type metal, when, the work about one third done, he felt satisfied that he could do them better upon wood; and in September of that year attempted one of them in the new material. Here are extracts from his Diary:—



FROM THE "LOOKING-GLASS OF THE MIND."

"Sept. 24.—This morning I was quite discouraged on seeing a crack in the box-wood. Employed as usual at the Doctor's. Came home to dinner, glued the wood, and began again with fresh hopes of producing a good wood-engraving."

"Sept. 26.—This morning rose at five o'clock. Took a little walk. Engraved. Employed during the chief part of the forenoon in taking out medicine. Came home after dinner and finished the wooden cut. Was pretty well satisfied with the impression, and so was Durell. Desired the turner to prepare the other twenty-four."

The remainder of the book was done on wood. [In 1800 a new edition, brought out by Longworth, was altogether on wood.] Thenceforth type-metal was discarded, and Anderson became an ENGRAVER ON WOOD.

In 1795 he was licensed to practise medicine. When, soon after, the yellow-fever prevailed in New York, he was appointed by the health commissioners of the city as resident physician at Bellevue Hospital, three miles out of town: his salary twenty shillings a day. He was there three months, from August to November, 1795, for part of the time the only physician, at one period with from thirty to forty patients under his care. Notwithstanding this heavy charge, he found time for his favorite engraving. Yet not neglecting his hospital duty, as is sufficiently proved by the offer to him shortly afterwards of the post of Physician to the New York Dispensary, which his passion for art forbade his accepting. In the next year he received his diploma as Doctor of Medicine. He was now a physician, a designer and engraver (on both wood and copper), and (having taken a store for the purpose) a bookseller and publisher of small illustrated works. The bookselling, not bringing profit, had to be given up. Not so the engraving, which still alternated with his practice as a physician, a practice successfully continued by him, though against the grain,—for he was not only conscientious, but "morbidly sensitive,"—until 1798. In 1798 the yellow-fever again visited New York. Anderson's infant son died of it in July; and in September his wife, his father and mother, his brother, mother-in-law, and a sister-in-law, had all fallen victims. Utterly desolate, one can understand how he had no heart left for the active medical life. He voyaged next year to the West Indies, and two or three months spent with an uncle, who was "King's botanist" in the island of St. Vincent, stirred in him some care for botany,—a consolation in his sorrow; but we cannot wonder that henceforth he preferred the quiet seclusion of an engraver's work. The early delight became his sole occupation and his solace. Seventy years remained for him. He married again, a sister of his wife. But it is time I turned from the personal history of the man (well worthy of more amplification, for he was a man of extraordinary character and talent, at once physician, engraver, designer, botanist, musician, and verse-maker) to the special subject of my writing, a consideration of the engravings produced by him.

I may omit, beyond mention of a few, those executed by him in copper, as well as those upon type-metal. In 1793 he had not only acquaintance, but employment, with John Roberts, before spoken of; helping him in his work and also engraving plates for him, among them a portrait of Francis I. as frontispiece to Robertson's *Charles the Fifth*, published in New York in 1800. Numerous other plates he engraved for various publications: his last important works of the kind in 1812, a copy of Holbein's *Last Supper*, six inches by eight, to illustrate a quarto Bible; and some allegorical designs of his own, the *Wheel of Fortune* and the *Twelve Stages of Human Life—from the Cradle to the Grave*. I pass now to his engravings on wood, to which after 1812 he chiefly devoted himself.

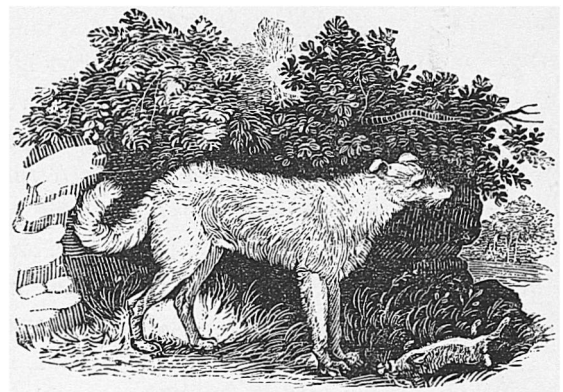
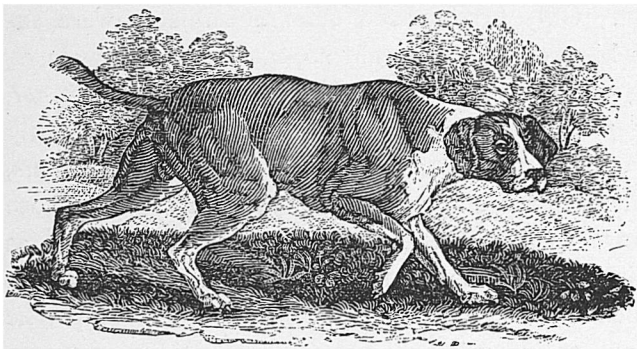
His first, as before said, were those for the *Looking-Glass of the Mind*, done for Durell,—poor cuts certainly in manipulation, but not without an artist's feeling; his originals were poor.

Durell, writes Lossing, "became an extensive reprinter of English works, small and great, from toy-books to a folio edition of *Josephus* and more than a hundred volumes of *English Classics*. He employed Anderson to reproduce the pictures in these works," (seldom, I imagine, more than a single frontispiece, — the custom then,) "and they were done with great skill considering his opportunities." For Hugh Gaine, the eminent journalist during the Revolution, he engraved "on type-metal" illustrations of the *Pilgrim's Progress*; for Brewer, cuts for *Tom Thumb's Folio*; for Harrison, pictures for a book of *Fables*; for Babcock, of Hartford, fifteen cuts for fifty shillings; for Reid, Campbell, and Wood, portraits and cuts for their several editions of Dilworth's *Spelling Book*; for Philip Freneau, the poet, cuts for a *Primer*; and in 1795 began engraving the cuts for an edition of Webster's *Spelling Book* for Bunce & Co. (afterwards published by Coolidge). So Lossing, from whose words it would seem that all these works except the *Pilgrim's Progress* were engraved on wood. I incline, however, to think that some, if not all but the Webster, were early works, and on metal. There is no finding out without sight of the metal or wood blocks themselves. After all it matters not: his type-metal work, speaking *Hibernice*, was only wood-engraving on metal.



FROM "EMBLEMS OF MORTALITY."

Of some later works I can speak with more certainty. In 1796 he drew and engraved his great cut of the human skeleton, a cut three feet high, enlarged from Albinus's *Anatomy*. Of this cut, which he was justly proud of, (he showed it to me the only time I saw him, not long before his death,) but two or three impressions were ever printed, the block being broken by the pressure. It was indeed a remarkable work, especially for that time. He also drew and engraved, on wood and copper, illustrations for an early edition of Irving's and Paulding's *Salmagundi*; copied fifty cuts done for *Emblems of Mortality* (Holbein's *Dance of Death*) by Thomas and John Bewick, published in 1810 by John Babcock of Hartford, Conn., and republished by Babcock & Co., Charleston, and S. Babcock, New Haven, in 1846, on which occasion "three of the cuts, representing Adam and Eve in various situations, it was thought advisable to omit." The last cut was also omitted, "being apparently obscure in its design to an American reader." In 1802, for David Longworth, he undertook the reproduction of Bewick's *Quadrupeds*, three hundred cuts.



FROM BEWICK'S "QUADRUPEDS," AS RE-ENGRAVED BY ANDERSON.

I have not been able to obtain a sight of Anderson's book; the one copy I heard of in the Society Library, New York, having been taken away and not returned. But I have seen the cuts, the electrotype plates having fallen into the hands of another publisher, T. W. Strong, who made use of them, with the Bewick letter-press also, for a series of children's toy-books. Comparing them with the English originals, I find that they are all directly copied from Bewick,



FROM THE SHAKSPERE. — AFTER THOMPSON.

Anderson, "an infinity of cuts for his excellent set of small books."

In 1812 he engraved a dozen cuts for a Shakspeare for Monroe & Francis: copies from cuts by John Thompson, after Thurston's designs. They are noticeable as the chief of his very few departures from the style of his favorite Bewick. Yet not altogether a departure. Thompson's work was, I have no doubt, in the usual manner of Thurston, a rich crossed black line; Anderson, keeping the general order of lines, has cut out the crossings, doing the work rather in white line, though the feeling and drawing and much of the character of the original engraving are preserved. He copied in similar style a series of the *Seven Ages*, also by Thompson. About 1818 he appears at his best. That date is given by Lossing to four large engravings after the German artist, Ridinger, engravings (Lossing says) $12\frac{1}{2}$ by $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, illustrating the *Four Seasons*. Lossing adds: "He also engraved on a little smaller scale the same subject from paintings by Teniers."



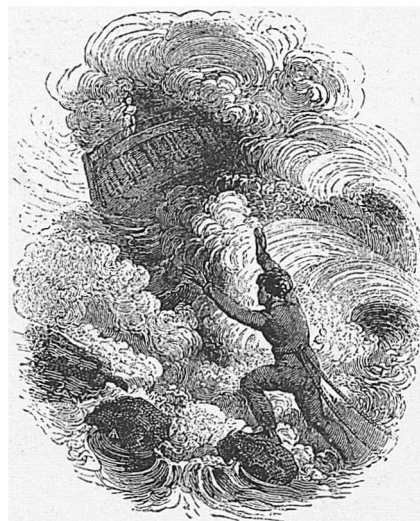
FROM THE "FABLES OF PILPAY."

meaning by the graver. The Teniers a reedy lake with wild ducks in the water and others flying, and some rabbits under trees on a bank, is scarcely if at all inferior to the other. The date of 1818 is engraved on this.

appearing in the Anderson edition reversed. No doubt this was done, transfer of prints not being then understood, to facilitate the work of the draughtsman, though thereby the engraver had to follow back-handed the lines of his master. Considering the little practice *on wood* which Anderson had then had, they are wonderfully close copies: varying in excellence, but all very faithful in drawing and good in engraving; tamer certainly than the originals, as must be expected, and much inferior to them, yet showing a real artistic perception of their best qualities. About this time also he may have engraved for Longworth the *Fables of Flora*: head-vignettes on copper, tail-pieces on wood. He speaks too (in the very brief sketch of his own life, written by him in 1848, in the seventy-third year of his age) of Mr. Samuel Wood as one of his "most constant employers,"—I suppose at about this period of 1800, or later. Wood was still in business twenty years afterwards. "I did," says

Anderson, "an infinity of cuts for his excellent set of small books." In 1812 he engraved a dozen cuts for a Shakspeare for Monroe & Francis: copies from cuts by John Thompson, after Thurston's designs. They are noticeable as the chief of his very few departures from the style of his favorite Bewick. Yet not altogether a departure. Thompson's work was, I have no doubt, in the usual manner of Thurston, a rich crossed black line; Anderson, keeping the general order of lines, has cut out the crossings, doing the work rather in white line, though the feeling and drawing and much of the character of the original engraving are preserved. He copied in similar style a series of the *Seven Ages*, also by Thompson. About 1818 he appears at his best. That date is given by Lossing to four large engravings after the German artist, Ridinger, engravings (Lossing says) $12\frac{1}{2}$ by $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, illustrating the *Four Seasons*. Lossing adds: "He also engraved on a little smaller scale the same subject from paintings by Teniers." After a long search I came to the conclusion, in which a conversation with Dr. Lewis (the grandson) has since confirmed me, that Lossing's statement is incorrect. Only two, instead of eight subjects, were engraved by him, copied, it would seem, from copper plates, only using white line instead of black: one by Ridinger, *Returning from the Boar-Hunt*, its measurement slightly different from that given by Lossing; the other after Teniers, *Waterfowl*, a square subject $11\frac{1}{2}$ by $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches. I suppose he may have executed these as a trial of strength, or as a speculation, with hope of having the series taken up by some publisher; and that, disappointed in this hope, he did not care to complete the sets. The Ridinger (here-with given) speaks for itself. No more vigorous piece of pure white line work has been done outside of the Bewick circle. By pure white line I mean a line drawn with

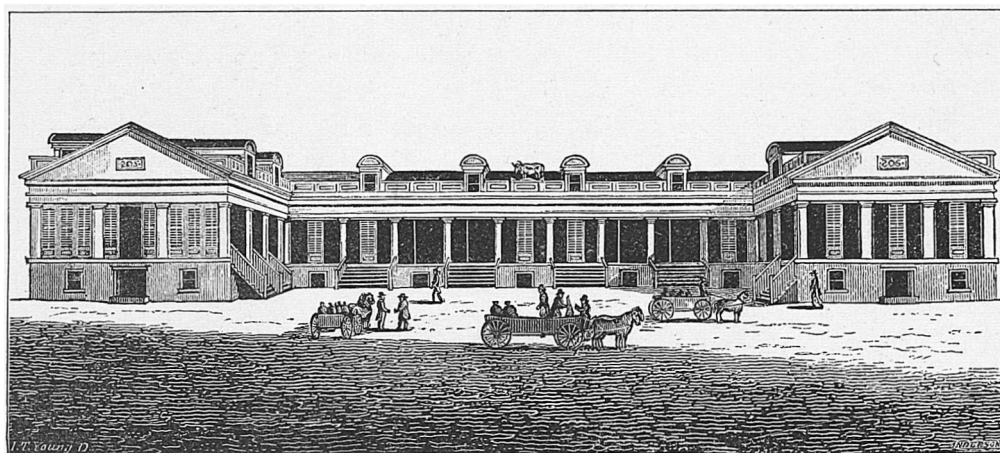
I find no date for the *Fables of Pilpay* (lately republished by Hurd and Houghton), some fifty or more small cuts following the designs of an English edition, but "better engraved," says Lossing. They are of Anderson's best work, better in command of line and finer than his ordinary work; and may perhaps be placed about this time, but I only hazard a guess. Somewhere at this date also I would look for a *Paul and Virginia*, of which I have only seen four or five cuts, copies of course, but with delicacy of line and touch not usual with him. For the twenty years following the two Ridinger and Teniers cuts I can find nothing certain. Lossing, not very orderly or regular in his list of works, has that width of gap. I am disposed, however, to place here some illustrations to *Peter Parley's Magazine* and other publications of the same author, and a series of large and rather coarse Bible cuts. (See next page.) There seems to have



FROM "PAUL AND VIRGINIA."

been no encouragement for such work as he proved himself capable of when he did the Ridinger and Teniers. The next noticeable work I find is in O'Reilly's *Sketches of Rochester*, 1838, which contains cuts by him, and Hall, and J. W. Orr, generally street views or buildings, very stiff and formal; Anderson's the best, with an exactness and evenness of line hardly to be expected after his earlier free-handedness. Of the same character, and about the same date, or it may be somewhat ear-

lier, is a series of larger cuts of old buildings in the city of New York, done for the *New York Mirror*. He engraved also initial letters for Mrs. Balmanno's *Pen and Pencil*; the illustrations to Downing's *Landscape Gar-*



FROM "SKETCHES OF ROCHESTER."

dening, 1841; and some forty designs by T. H. Matteson for a *Shakspeare* published by Coolidge & Brother in 1853. Later in life his handiwork appeared in Bentley's *Spelling Book*; and yet later in a series of Revolutionary portraits. For many years he engraved for the American Tract Society small cuts, easily distinguished, to be found in their early publications. For many years also he was in the habit of engraving a larger and coarser class of work, chiefly illustrations of the life of the B. Virgin Mary, for Spanish printers in the West Indies, Mexico, and South America. Of these and of the Matteson series (neither worthy of his best powers) sufficient specimens are given in the Lossing *Memorial*. Some of his latest works, if not his last, were from drawings by H. L. Stephens, done for T. W. Strong. He was at work for his own amusement, I believe, to within a few days of his death. He died on the 17th of January, 1870, in the ninety-fifth year of his age.

Considering the vast amount of work accomplished by him, the many thousands of cuts he engraved, it is surprising how little can be met with even after a very careful and persistent search. Of the many cuts in Mr. Lossing's earnestly admiring *Memorial* there are not five that



BALAAM AND THE ANGEL.

very notable amount of his old manual skill also, — proofs of the man's indomitable perseverance and unfailing love for his occupation; but in themselves, as engravings, without thought of him and his age, not very remarkable. One little cut (here poorly reproduced) shows an exceptional minuteness and delicacy. But there is not enough in any of them to command much admiration simply as graver-work. And the same may be not unfairly said even of the work of his prime. The copies of Bewick (the staple of his best work) are wonderful, having regard to the



FROM THE MOREAU COLLECTION.

circumstances in which they were produced; but no appreciator of Bewick could speak of them as worthy of comparison with the originals. They are curiously good copies, valuable pioneer work, helps toward better. After these early things there is little improvement. I find only the two large cuts standing out as marks of a capacity which had not corresponding development. Such cuts as are given in the *Memorial*, not copies, but altogether his own work, (allowing that there may not have been much opportunity for choice,) bear out this judgment. The *Lear* and *Twelfth Night*, from Matteson's drawings, page 38, where

would establish Anderson's pretension to be even a good engraver. In the collection privately printed by Mr. Moreau, 1872, "one hundred and fifty engravings executed after his ninetieth year," we of course do not look for anything of much importance. The best there is a copy from a tail-piece from Bewick (not by Bewick's own hand, but Clennell's), which I have no hesitation in attributing to much earlier years. Some others also seem to me very dubiously dated. Most are very small, many mere inch-square trifles done for his own pleasure, evidences that he retained his artistic perceptions, with some

the line is his own, the *Holy Family*, page 65, the *Embargo*, page 70, are but common cuts. Probably his life through he was working for low prices, and there was neither demand nor appreciation for better work. None the less, however excused, he has to suffer the reproach of inferiority. It is an ungrateful task to pick out faults. It is part, though, of the critic's duty. He has to distinguish—let it be generously, yet truly—between the good and the bad, the better and the worse. In truth, except within the limitation of hindering circumstances entitling him to credit for overcoming so much of obstacle, a close study of all of Dr. Anderson's engraving on wood that I have been able to get sight of fails to draw from me a recognition of his special genius as an engraver. Had his work been original, like Bewick's, it had, indeed, been great; but, practised as he was on metal, and with Bewick's work before him, one thinks that, with his undoubted artistic feeling, conscientious study, and constant industry, he should have done more. He never equalled his master, nor have I seen anything of his (except the two large cuts) to compare with the work of Bewick's pupils, Nesbit, Clennell, Hole, Hughes, or Harvey. It must be owned, however, that we never see him at his best. Bad printing is not favorable to an engraver's reputation, nor does good printing avail on worn blocks. The only specimens we are able to give are but phototypes from ill-printed impressions. After all deductions, his is the honor of being the first wood-engraver in America.

For the rest, so remarkable was the man, so worthy of honor for himself as well as for the variety of his knowledges and doings, that he can well afford to be rated lower in this one of his endeavors, can well submit to be considered under this one aspect of *engraver on wood* as first in time only, not in the average of the work he did. Of his faculty as an engraver on copper and as a designer, it has not been within my province to speak. The esteem of his artist contemporaries was shown by his election, in May, 1843, as an honorary member of the National Academy of Design. He had also been a member of the earlier New York Academy of the Fine Arts.

W. J. LINTON.



TAIL-PIECE. — AFTER CLENNEL.



AFTER BEWICK.

